



*Office of the United States Attorney
District of Arizona*

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SMUGGLER SENTENCED TO 5 YEARS IN PRISON FOR BORDER CROSSING CAUSING DEATH

PHOENIX – Israel Morales-Medrano, 22, of Durango, Mexico, was sentenced here Wednesday by U.S. District Judge James A. Teilborg to 60 months in prison for a May 2005 attempt to cross the border at mid-day resulting in the death of Francisca Robles, 50. Morales-Medrano had pleaded guilty under a plea agreement in December 2005 to felony charges of bringing aliens to the United States resulting in death.

U.S. Attorney Paul K. Charlton said of the sentencing, "This is yet another tragic story of a life lost in the desert, another family without a daughter, children without a mother, and another coyote whose only care was for himself and his profit."

On May 26, 2005, Morales-Medrano led a group of six aliens, three men and three women, across the border from Sonora, Mexico into the U.S. near the town of San Luis, Ariz. After several hours of walking all three women fell behind. Aside from brief rest breaks, Morales-Medrano did not halt the group or go back for the women.

Border Patrol Agents intercepted the group of men and located the women, but not before Francisca Robles had perished of exposure. Another woman was taken to a hospital and treated for heat exhaustion.

Morales-Medrano chose to cross into the United States through the desert because he thought he would have a better chance of avoiding detection by Border Patrol Agents. He also instructed the aliens to wear carpet pieces over their shoes to obscure footprints.

The investigation in this case was conducted by U.S. Border Patrol, U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Yuma County Sheriff's Office. The prosecution was handled by Gary M. Restaino, Assistant U.S. Attorney, District of Arizona, Phoenix.

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